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ABSTRACT

For the past few years, educators have attempted to find solutions for the growing literacy crisis in American colleges. Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, has tried an integrated approach, a "thought and expression" program based upon a classical model. On the assumption that students can improve communication by integrating logic, English, and speech, freshmen are required to take all three courses during the same semester. Instructors in the three departments at Gonzaga make a concentrated effort to reinforce the overall goals rather than simply repeat subject matter.
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BLENDING SPEECH, ENGLISH AND LOGIC

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The current national literary crisis has prompted a lively and on-going discussion which has suggested a number of potential solutions. One of these solutions consists of a "back to basics" approach for improving communication skills. In pursuing this approach, Gonzaga University three years ago established a program entitled "Thought and Expression" to integrate skills in speaking, writing and critical thinking. "Thought and Expression" is a block of three coordinated courses designed to help students acquire independent but mutually reinforcing skills in analytical thought and in expository, argumentative and persuasive oral and written expression. Using the classical model as their pedagogical base, faculty members from Speech, English and Philosophy have structured courses to make subject matter complementary.

HISTORICAL JUSTIFICATION

Corbett emphasizes that rhetoric was a vital discipline involving Logic, Speech and Composition throughout the Western educational tr dition until sometime in the 19th century.[1] The ancient Greeks viewed rhetoric as an integrated subject and, indeed, Aristotle's rhetoric is an outgrowth of his famous work on Logic, The Organon. The Romans admired and consequently utilized a blended approach with the five canons of invention, disposition, elocution, style and delivery. In the Middle Ages, the trivium was one of the primary educational devices geared to helping young students communicate effectively in both writing and speaking. Although Baldwin stresses that Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric received varying degrees of emphasis throughout the Middle Ages, there

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is little doubt that the three subjects were studied together and were used to reinforce each other.[2] Students in the 11th and 12th century monastic schools were grounded in the principles of Rhetoric at an early age. In the 13th century, students were expected to know the fundamentals by the time they entered the University before taking advanced courses in Dialectic and Grammar.[3] Although there were exceptions, the Medieval and early Renaissance schools generally adhered to this practice of promoting Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric as a unified method of teaching.

Only in the 16th century did a major change take place in this basic approach when the Frenchman Ramus separated Logic and Rhetoric. Ramus dictated that Rhetoric should deal with style while invention and judgment should be the proper domain of Logic. The Oratorie, a work which summarized the theory of Ramus, was imported from France to England in 1577, by Talaeus. This work became a dominant influence on British rhetorical studies for more than fifty years. The approach of Ramus and Talaeus triumphed over the German-Lutheran school of Melantchon and Sturm which stressed communication fundamentals.[4] Since early American schools were modeled after the educational system in Britain,[5] Speech, Logic and English tended to be studied in isolation as a result of the Ramistic split. The elocutionary movement of the 19th century typifies the narrow concentration on one facet of Rhetoric. It would of course be a gross generalization to claim that Speech teachers since the Ramistic split have not attempted to reinforce the components of Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric, but the separation of the subjects still seems to be felt today with many academic departments autonomous and protective of their particular academic disciplines. Students often study Logic as an isolated mental exercise; Speech can mean public

speaking or interpersonal communication; and Composition often includes a combination of grammar and a study of literature. Although the size of the modern American University alone often makes it pragmatically impossible to study Communication as an integrated discipline, the student still appears to be the loser.

The historical perspective suggests that there is a distinct advantage in blending all three disciplines because each subject reinforces the others and all contribute to the related process of communicating with grace and precision. The literacy crisis in today's colleges seems to reflect the disadvantage of isolating the three subjects. High school students taking English seem to be rarely challenged to test the logical validity of their arguments. Individuals in Speech classes often concentrate on standup speaking or interpersonal communication exercises without specific in-depth attention to organization, clarity of thought and cogency of arguments. It should not be surprising then that when these same students enter college, they cannot communicate effectively and find it difficult to write coherent sentences which reflect a careful thought process. In what can be seen as a historical result of the Ramistic split, core curricula or general requirements for Universities often seem to be dictated more by an individual department establishing its own academic territory than by a strong concern for the education of the student.

GONZAGA PROGRAM

On the assumption that students can learn to improve communication by integrating the three areas, Gonzaga Freshmen were required to take introductory courses in Speech, English, and Logic during the same semester. Students scoring in the lower half of the Test of Standard Written English took the "Thought and Expression" sequence first semester;

those scoring in the upper half took it during the second semester. Thus, each semester's group was relatively homogeneous in terms of preparation and ability.

Each course in the block has its own specific goals. In the Logic course, the individual is introduced to deductive philosophical thinking, logical argumentation, and fallacies. In the Composition class, the student is asked to organize critical thought into essays which define, compare and contrast, classify, analyze and persuade. In the Speech course, the student is expected to listen critically and to prepare speeches which reflect organized and logical thinking. While the student's acquisition and demonstration of these skills in the three classes is reflected in written and oral work throughout the semester, the subject matter in the Speech course also deals with interpersonal and small group communication, non-verbal factors and the psychology of persuasion. Students are also expected to make public speeches.

The common purpose of the three classes is to provide students with the basic tools of logical analysis, leading to clear and effective oral and written communication. However, each of the three disciplines has its own specific goals and objectives.

In the two credit Logic component, students develop the ability to recognize logical arguments in their reading and to determine the validity of such arguments. In order to accomplish this goal, students need to know the distinction between arguments and statements, between empirical statements and necessary statements, and between inductive and deductive arguments. They must learn to identify and learn to determine the validity of categorical, conditional, alternative and disjunctive syllogisms as well as the enthymeme. They must also be able to recognize

and identify the following fallacies: ad hominem, "straw man," faulty analogy, composition and division, hasty generalization, post hoc, and appeal to authority. Once they control this terminology, students apply it to readings and articles by submitting these materials to logical analysis.[6]

In the three credit Composition component, students are taught basic organizational skills and asked to demonstrate their control of standard syntax, punctuation, spelling, and diction. Over the course of the semester, traditional rhetorical approaches are introduced and students write papers demonstrating their control of definition, description, comparison and contrast, analogy, causal analysis, process, argumentation and persuasion. While a formal research or library paper is not a required part of this course, students are expected to use effectively the evidence from secondary sources that may be necessary in an analytical or argumentative paper. A common text,[7] containing a variety of assignments, is used as the source material for analysis and imitation in all of the Composition sections. This same text is also made available to Philosophy and Speech so that particular readings or essays can be the subject of common analysis and use in the entire "T&E" block.

In the two hour Speech component, instructors seek to improve the students' interpersonal skills, acquaint them with the fundamentals of Speech Communication on the college level, and improve the organizational and critical thinking skills they need for effective oral communication. Students demonstrate their control of these skills in speeches given throughout the semester. Interpersonal as well as organizational and critical skills are improved so that students can function effectively in communicating on a one-to-one basis, in small group situations and in public address. The fundamentals of Speech Communication to which students

are introduced include a model of the speech process, listening, fear psychology, general semantics as applied to oral communication, non-verbal communication, persuasion with special emphasis on logical argumentation and critical listening, and problem solving group dynamics. Through the use of a common text,[8] the Speech sections systematically work their way through an introduction to the speech communication process, demonstration speeches, informative speeches on communication, research topics, the principles of persuasion, persuasive speeches, and the problem solving group process. This particular method of organizing the course relies on the introduction of basic organizational principles and outlining skills in the Composition component of "T&E" early in the semester, and the teaching of logical analysis as it applies to persuasive speaking and group problem solving in the Logic component, before and during the time these elements are treated in Speech.

Thus, even though the three departments involved in this effort do not make use of one common text, the subject matter is obviously coordinated. In this approach, the student has the unified experience of moving from the initial step of applying clear, logical thinking to a problem, through the intermediate process of organizing the material involved, to the final expression of the proper solution in writing and speech.

Special attention is given in all three classes to careful listening and critical reading. Students in the Speech course are asked to evaluate carefully the presentations given in class according to the criteria of sound argumentation. Similarly, in Logic and Composition, students respond critically to the work of their peers.

Recently, the coordinators of the "Thought & Expression" program

conducted a survey of both faculty and students near the completion of the semester. Faculty were asked to evaluate the benefits of the program and to suggest improvements. Students were instructed to rate the experimental project, using as criteria improvement in critical thinking, in organization of thought, and in public speaking. They were also asked to describe the advantages and disadvantages of taking the three courses together.

Approximately ninety per cent of the students said that their ability to organize materials, think critically, and write and speak clearly and forcefully had improved because of the "Thought & Expression" sequence. Over one third concluded that these skills had been very much improved, while another fifty-six per cent saw some improvement. Less than ten per cent thought there had been no improvement. In the section of the questionnaire reserved for specific comments, the most frequently named advantage of the sequence was simply that students thought their ability to speak and write logically had noticeably improved; the most commonly cited disadvantages were that the sequence tied up too much of the students' schedule and that there was not enough consistency in approach or overlap among the three components of the sequence.

Faculty members from the three departments have also pointed out pluses and minuses--some of which (except for the different perspective) are identical to those suggested by students. Faculty members find it difficult to devote the amount of time necessary to integrate the courses effectively. While they are in accord on the basic objectives of the course, few concur on the teaching techniques necessary to carry out those objectives. Disagreement takes place among faculty members from the three participating departments as well as within individual

departments. There seems to be some concern that the goals envisioned may not be achievable in one semester. Nevertheless, this experimental project has helped focus the attention of faculty members throughout the University on the literacy problem as it exists at this institution. Increasingly frequent discussions on methods of implementing the program are helping to address the question of how to cope with declining literacy. "Thought and Expression" is forcing faculty in the three departments involved--and eventually, it is hoped, faculty throughout the University[9]--to reconsider their teaching methods; it has also created healthy cross fertilization between departments. The most significant advantage noted by faculty, of course, is a definite improvement in basic communication skills by most students as a result of the integrated sequence.[10]

The "Thought and Expression" block has been tried for three years. While not all students appear to benefit from this approach, many show a marked improvement in their ability to communicate effectively in both writing and speaking. Our experience with "Thought and Expression" would suggest that a possible solution to the literacy crisis is to be found not in radical restructuring of the curriculum or in reckless innovation but that it may well consist of an integrated program which attempts to synthesize communication skills at an early stage of the student's college career.

In the time that "Thought and Expression" has been taught, it has not been possible to prove that all students who went through it have improved their ability to think, write and speak effectively in ways they would not have improved had they not taken the block, or even that all students who were exposed to "T&E" appear to benefit from this approach. However, the approach is a holistic, integrated way of dealing with a perennial and real problem that seems to have been

approached most effectively in the past in a manner similar to that of "Thought and Expression."

The study of individual disciplines as separate elements of an education leads to a kind of specialization which is necessary and useful if advances are to be made in individual disciplines. But on the introductory level, the teaching of specialized structures and systems which are peculiar only to the refined aspects of a particular discipline seems destructive to the effort to produce well-educated people. For example, the propensity of some logic teachers to teach symbolic logic in introductory courses, or the inclination of certain composition teachers to teach literature rather than to involve themselves in the unglamorous grind of overseeing and correcting their students' continuous writing and rewriting, or the desire of some speech teachers to teach their beginning students specialized courses in rhetorical theory all seem inappropriate if our goals are critical thinking and effective communication. The kind of innovation that results from the teacher's adaption of his most stimulating graduate school course or even from his or her current research interests too often leads to introductory courses which do not do justice to the needs of beginning students. In such courses the student gains limited control of a very specialized bit of material, but not the overall understanding and the skills needed by the individual who can communicate with precision and force. A holistic approach based on classical principles can provide college students with thorough control of the basic thinking and expressing skills essential to advanced learning.

NOTES

[1] Edward P. J. Corbett, Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student, 2nd ed. (1965; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 31.

[2] Charles Sears Baldwin, Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic to 1400, 2nd ed. (1928; rpt. Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1959), p. 91.

[3] James J. Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 44.

[4] Corbett, p. 535.

[5] Karl R. Wallace, ed., History of Speech Education in America (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), p. 277.

[6] The Philosophy Department has experimented with a number of texts, but has not been able to agree on a common book except for one semester at a time. Currently, several faculty members in the Department are using Understanding Arguments, An Introduction to Critical Thinking, by Robert J. Fogelin (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1978). However, there is some feeling that a common text may not be as useful or necessary in Logic as it is in Speech or English.

[7] The English Department has used for one year and agreed to continue for at least one more year Prose Models, by Gerald Levin, Fourth Edition, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1978).

[8] The first text in common used by the Speech Department was Speech Communication, A Contemporary Introduction, by Gordon I. Zimmerman, James L. Owen and David R. Seibert (San Francisco: West Publishing Co., 1977). The Department has now changed to Understanding and Sharing, An Introduction to Speech Communication, by Judy C. Pearson and Paul E. Nelson (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1979).

[9] The English Department put on a writing workshop for faculty throughout the University during the summer of 1979. Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, this workshop is the first step in an experimental effort to follow up the lower division efforts of "Thought and Expression" on the upper division level by providing instructors from the English Departments to assist instructors in other academic areas with the writing of students in their major courses.

[10] The University Core Curriculum Committee has expressed its commitment to a continuation and strengthening of "Thought and Expression" by urging the hiring of a Coordinator whose function would be to make the program even more effective.